United Nations A/C.2/66/SR.24

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 February 2012

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 26 October 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Yohanna (Vice-Chair) ..... (Nigeria)

Contents

Agenda item 16: Information and communication technologies for development

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

11-56478 (E)

Please recycle

In the absence of Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Mr. Yohanna (Nigeria), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 16: Information and communication technologies for development (A/66/64-E/2011/77, A/66/67-E/2011/79 and A/66/77-E/2011/103)

1. **Ms. Qian** (Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on Enhanced Cooperation on Public Policy Issues Pertaining to the Internet (A/66/77-E/2011/103), said that the results of the broad-based consultations had revealed that, while there was no agreement on what issues should be prioritized, a number of issues had been identified where cooperation would be helpful. They included cybercrime, freedom of information and management of critical internet resources. Moreover, but a few shared principles could be discerned, notably the principle that authority for Internet-related public policy issues was the sovereign right of States and that management of the Internet should continue to include civil society, the private sector, international organizations and the academic and technical communities.

2. **Mr. Hamdi** (Science, Technology and ICT Branch, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at the regional and international levels (A/66/64-E/2011/77), said that the use of mobile telephones had expanded beyond all expectations. Mobile networks were currently accessible to 90 per cent of the world's population, including 75 per cent of those living in rural areas. Almost three quarters of mobile subscriptions were in developing countries, and new applications were constantly being developed. Concerns about the digital divide remained but the nature of the divide was changing. Concerns likewise persisted about privacy and security and there were several international initiatives under way to enable States to respond effectively to cyberthreats.

3. Given the improved level of connectivity, opportunities for bringing about development gains from information and communication technologies (ICTs) were expanding. Accordingly, when formulating development policies more attention should be paid to how ICTs were applied in the productive sectors. Also, more should be done to engage the private sector and to promote the use of ICTs by small and medium-sized enterprises in the developing world.

4. The WSIS Forum and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) were helping to broaden participation and promote dialogue and partnerships on Internet issues.

5. Speaking on behalf of Mr. Frederic Riehl, former Chair of the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum, he introduced the report of the Working Group (A/66/67-E/2011/79) adding that, since the Working Group had not had sufficient time to formulate recommendations its mandate had been extended.

6. **Ms. Handrujovicz** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that while ICTs held great potential for eradicating poverty and promoting inclusive growth and development, the promise of ICTs remained largely unfulfilled. The Group was concerned about the new dimensions that the digital divide had taken in terms of quality of access. Greater efforts were needed to bridge the gap in Internet access and broadband connectivity.

7. The Group attached great importance to the Internet Governance Forum, which had provided a useful framework for dialogue on public policy issues. It welcomed the extension of the Working Group's mandate and invited the Secretary-General to hold further consultations in order to enable Governments to carry out their responsibilities in respect of international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet.

8. ICTs were a powerful force for development and offered many opportunities to disadvantaged sectors. Accordingly, greater emphasis was needed on the transfer of such technologies to developing countries. The Group acknowledged the work being done in that regard by the various agencies and regional commissions.

9. In order for developing countries to benefit from ICTs, greater emphasis should be placed on reducing costs, including the cost of broadband connections, and on capacity-building.

10. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that despite increasing Internet use worldwide, the least developed

countries were finding it increasingly difficult to make such technologies available to their people and were being increasingly marginalized. The international community should make every effort to reduce that digital divide. The Group stressed the need to implement the Plan of Action adopted by the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society, the Tunis Commitment, and the 2005 Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

11. The Group was fully committed to building a modern ICT infrastructure and promoting Internet access through mobile broadband and satellite connections and it called upon development partners to provide enhanced support for ICT infrastructure development, to facilitate the transfer of relevant skills and to actively support private sector development to that end. The United Nations should remain at the forefront of efforts to enhance access to ICTs, inter alia, through the Internet Governance Forum.

12. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) said that it was incumbent on all to harness the full potential of information and communications technologies. Progress was being made in disseminating mobile connectivity, but narrowing the digital divide particularly in areas such as mobile broadband connectivity and cloud computing remained a challenge. It was important to integrate ICT into national and regional development programmes, to enhance international efforts to provide affordable access to ICT and to increase investment in ICT. The members of ASEAN believed that it was vital to continue working together through regional and international cooperation as well as through public-private partnerships to develop the ICT sector.

13. Well over 11 million people in ASEAN countries were currently employed in the ICT industry. Moreover, 2011 had seen the adoption of an ICT master plan which was designed to establish ICT as an engine of growth for ASEAN member States and to transform the region into a global ICT hub. ASEAN was grateful for the work being done by various United Nations agencies and ESCAP to promote the use of ICT and it supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote consultations among Governments and all stakeholders on Internet-related public policy matters.

14. **Ms. Haynes** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that many CARICOM States had formulated national ICT strategies and, in 2005, a regional ICT steering committee had been established. It had developed a regional digital development strategy (RDDS), which was designed to foster a culture of innovation and quality, and to help business and Governments use ICT for sustainable growth and to support development. Currently CARICOM member States, like other developing countries, had very limited broadband network coverage prompting concern that a new digital divide based on the quality of access to ICT resources might arise.

15. Growth in the use of ICT for development depended on collaboration with the private sector and civil society and on North-South and South-South cooperation. CARICOM States had received substantial support from international development partners including the European Union and the Government of Spain and they looked forward to continued support from the United Nations system. They welcomed the recent decision to extend the mandate of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum.

16. **Mr. Ong** Sze Wang (Singapore) said that ICT could aid development in many ways, including by reducing the costs of trade transactions and increasing their speed. As a trading hub, Singapore realized the value of ICT and had been among the first to adopt paperless trade and documentation systems. It welcomed the initiative to form a community of United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade (UNNExT) in the Asia-Pacific region.

17. Recent ICT advances in the social field had been revolutionary. With the launch in 2010 of the first websites using domain names in non-Latin languages, the way was open for billions of non-English speakers to access the Internet.

18. Singapore was also focused on building a strong e-government; a wide variety of public services ranging from filing taxes to obtaining business licences were being provided through ICT. Innovations were constantly being made to keep pace with ICT developments. In environmental protection, ICT research should make energy efficiency a high priority

for all new products and systems, as Singapore's Green Information Technology initiative sought to do.

19. Investment in infrastructure was but one of the two components needed to realize the potential of ICT for development, the other being investment in manpower. Singapore's new manpower development road map would focus on developing ICT experts and on education in emerging areas such as Green Information Technologies and cloud computing.

20. Singapore believed in sharing its experience with other developing countries and was currently sharing experiences in such areas as environmental protection, education and ICT. Since 1992, it had organized training courses for more than 75,000 officials from 170 countries.

21. **Mr. Farias** (Brazil) said that ICT must be a tool in the service of development. Brazil was improving its e-government tools and spreading the use of interoperable standards. The international community must focus on the digital divide, both within countries and between developed and developing nations, and address the lack of effective financial mechanisms to back ICT development. Policies should be implemented so that all Member States could benefit from the new potentialities of instant networking. More investment in broadband infrastructure and innovative services was needed in order to generate new jobs and incomes.

22. The Internet had evolved into a global facility. Consequently, its governance should be multilateral and democratic. Brazil had welcomed the decision, in 2010, to renew the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). IGF should focus on policy dialogue and create mechanisms to ensure greater participation of stakeholders from developing countries. It should also produce clear outputs, such as a concise document indicating convergent as well as diverse ideas expressed in relation to each of the topics addressed by IGF.

23. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) welcomed the extension of the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum; he believed that the Forum would help improve the socio-economic conditions of millions.

24. He stressed the need for transfer of technology, especially information technology to the developing world at an affordable cost. Unfortunately, little had been done and thus far to transfer technology and the least developed countries in particular had little, if any, cutting-edge technology. The private sector was crucial, as most state-of-the-art technology belonged to the private sector. Member States should immediately address the issue within the ambit of the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

25. **Mr. Xie** Xiaowu (People's Republic of China) said that the information and communication industry had become a basic sector of China's economy, with more than 1 billion telephone users and 142 million broadband users. Internet access had been upgraded to a high-speed network and China would speed up its efforts to develop infrastructures for a new-generation information network to promote development of ICTs, pushing for development of mobile Internet, e-government, e-business and communications in rural areas, accelerating the ICT application process in urban communities and leveraging ICT to realize green industrial development.

26. States had the sovereign right to make decisions on Internet issues and the right and responsibility to deal with international public policy issues related to the Internet. The United Nations should play an active role in Internet governance. In keeping with the principles of the World Summit on the Information Society, efforts were needed to increase developing country involvement so that all countries could participate on an equal footing in managing Internet resources. It was necessary to further promote multilingualism in domain names and diversity of network culture, and to strengthen Internet security through international cooperation.

27. The United Nations should play an increasingly important role in promoting development through ICT. Every State and every citizen was entitled to an information society that benefited all and was duty-bound to join in the effort to build such a society.

28. **Mr. Borg** (Malta) said that Malta's economic development depended on providing its citizens affordable ICTs; Malta was doing that through various programmes, that provided subsidized Internet rates, refurbished computers, free Wi-Fi Internet access and training in basic IT skills. Malta was exploring ways to deploy the next-generation broadband network nationwide as soon as possible. Within the European Union, Malta was seeking to achieve a single digital market through the Digital Agenda for Europe.

29. The Government, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Secretariat, had set up the COMNET Foundation for ICT Development, to promote ICT cooperation among members of the Commonwealth. Malta had been leading a Commonwealth Internet Governance Forum and was currently working on a cybercrime initiative to help developing countries achieve the requisite technical and human capacity to combat cybercrime. The Foundation's portfolio on ICT development was also being placed at the disposal of developing countries.

30. Malta supported Internet governance capacity-building through its relationship with DiploFoundation, a non-profit organization, which worked to promote the participation of stakeholders, particularly from developing countries, in the Internet governance and ICT policy debate. In small developing countries, DiploFoundation had trained the first generation of Internet governance policymakers. Malta had also supported DiploFoundation in the development and implementation of different e-participation methods. E-participation increased the inclusiveness of global Internet policy processes by strengthening the voices of developing countries and local communities worldwide.

31. **Mr. Singh** (India) said that it was becoming increasingly evident that, as a rapidly evolving medium, the Internet required timely global solutions, not divergent national policies. Recognizing the need for enhanced cooperation and being firmly committed to the multi-stakeholder approach, his delegation wished to propose the establishment of a new institutional mechanism, to be called the United Nations Committee for Internet-Related Policies (CIRP), in order to ensure that the Internet was governed in a democratic and participatory manner. It would be mandated to:

(i) Develop international public policies with a view to ensuring coordination of Internet-related global issues;

(ii) Coordinate the bodies responsible for technical functioning of the Internet, including global standards setting;

(iii) Facilitate negotiation of treaties, and agreements on Internet-related public policies;

(iv) Address developmental issues related to the Internet;

(v) Promote civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, including the right to development;

(vi) Undertake arbitration and dispute resolution where necessary; and

(vii) See to crisis management in relation to the Internet.

32. The Committee would comprise 50 Member States chosen on the basis of equitable geographical representation and would meet annually for two weeks. To ensure participation of all relevant stakeholders, it would establish four advisory groups, one each for civil society, the private sector, intergovernmental and international organizations, and the technical and academic community. It would receive inputs from the Internet Governance Forum and it would report directly to the General Assembly.

33. His delegation called for the establishment of an open-ended working group under the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to draw up the detailed terms of reference with a view to setting CIRP up within 18 months.

34. **Mr. Lakhal** (Tunisia) said that ICTs had become essential for developing countries' participation in the world economy. Not only could they do much to eradicate poverty, promote development and close the widening gap between developed and developing countries, but the Tunisian revolution had shown that, if used properly to propagate the ideals of democracy and justice for all, ICTs could also be a powerful means of enfranchising peoples. Using the Internet, cell phones and social media, educated young Tunisians had managed to overthrow a 23-year-old dictatorship and to communicate their legitimate aspirations to the whole world. They had then organized throughout the country to rebel against years of injustice.

35. As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the digital divide had changed from a quantitative divide to a disparity in quality and capacity, the cost of broadband Internet service being inversely proportional to the level of development. Change was thus occurring at two speeds, in both economic and technological terms, inasmuch as ICTs reflected the state of the world.

36. It was necessary to foster conditions for the establishment of a global digital partnership based on

solidarity and emphasizing the transfer of ICTs to — and their dissemination in — developing countries. The United Nations should monitor progress in the transfer of technology and pay special attention to reductions in costs — including the cost of broadband connections — and building capacity.

37. **Mr. Emozozo** (Nigeria) said that while the total number of Internet users continued to grow, there was still a marked difference between Europe, where 65 per cent of the population was estimated to be online by the end of 2010 and sub-Saharan Africa, with only 9.6 per cent. It was therefore imperative to exert further efforts to enhance Internet use and security.

38. In 2001, Nigeria had experienced a telecommunications boom with the arrival of the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM): growth in the sector had been sustained and Nigeria currently had 83 million active GSM lines.

39. Broadband access was growing faster in developed countries, raising concerns about a new digital divide based on quality of access. Nigeria therefore called for innovative approaches to promote universal access to broadband infrastructure.

40. In order for developing countries to benefit from ICTs, greater emphasis should be placed on reducing the cost of such technologies, including the cost of broadband connectivity, and on capacity-building.

41. Regarding effective surveillance and regulation, he said that the Internet Governance Forum had proven to be very useful in providing a framework for open dialogue on public policy issues relating to the Internet. It would benefit from greater participation by developing countries.

42. **Mr. Al-Kooheiji** (Bahrain) said that Bahrain's national strategies focused on using ICT for development in all its aspects, encompassing a range of sectors. The "Schools of the Future" project was designed to use state-of-the-art technology in education. The Ministry of Health used IT for preventive health programmes, delivery of primary care services and the development of health facility networks and public health facilities.

43. In 2011, Bahrain's e-Government authority had received the Global FutureGov Award, a leadership award from the Middle East Excellence Awards Institute and an award from the 12th Bled Forum on Europe. Use of e-services in 2010 had been 47 per cent for individuals, 85 per cent for the business sector and 92 per cent for the public sector. The Government had launched a national capacity-building programme to close the digital divide.

44. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that, given the general agreement regarding the need to assess how the Internet should be governed and regulated, his delegation had welcomed the General Assembly's renewal of the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

45. It hoped that the appointments of the IGF Chair and Executive Coordinator would be confirmed as soon as possible. It was vital that the IGF Secretariat, supported by the Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group, maintain its independence by ensuring that funding was provided on a voluntary basis by all interested stakeholders. That was crucial in order to ensure that the IGF agenda reflected the interests of all stakeholders, including those who did not ordinarily have a voice in United Nations multilateral forums.

46. The forthcoming London Conference on Cyberspace would bring together Governments from over 65 countries, international organizations and senior representatives of global business and civil society. People from around the world would be able to engage in the debate, as the event would be streamed online.

47. A globally networked world offered enormous economic and social opportunities. The Internet's capacity to increase prosperity and to empower individuals and societies was unparalleled in modern history. At the same time, the Internet provided opportunities for cybercrime; Governments could use technological advances to violate citizens' rights and prevent access to information and there was also a risk of misunderstandings arising between States, leading to increasing tensions in international relations. All of those issues would be addressed at the London Conference. Hopefully, the agenda set in London would allow the world to enjoy the full benefits of a safe and secure cyberspace for generations to come.

48. **Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan), noting that ICTs opened vast opportunities for interaction and collaboration across societies, said that the ICT sector accounted for an important share of her country's rapidly growing economy. Her Government's "open door" policy had facilitated the country's integration

into the world economy, and had also played an important role in attracting capital.

49. Her delegation stressed the positive developments achieved within the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (UN SPECA) in promoting knowledge-based economies and innovation. Azerbaijan valued the UN SPECA cooperation framework and would shortly be hosting the fourth session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based economies. It looked forward to hosting the IGF in 2012.

50. Azerbaijan remained a proponent of regional connectivity. In 2008, it had put forward the Trans-Eurasian Information Superhighway initiative (TEISH) aimed at creating a transnational fibre-optic backbone via a major new transit route: from Frankfurt to Hong Kong. That route would connect the biggest exchange points in Europe and Asia. In the second stage TEISH would provide affordable connectivity to landlocked countries in Eurasia, particularly Central Asia, allowing the project to become commercially viable and address the rapidly growing market of IP transit. Reporting on progress made, she said that Azerbaijan had recently hosted the first international workshop on TEISH with the participation of leading telecom operators from Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkey. A Project Secretariat had been established and the operators were working towards the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

51. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that one of his Government's priorities was to promote social and cultural cohesion and encourage economic integration by fostering the information society. It had already adopted several laws on information security, electronic trade and other matters, and had taken various steps towards improving the network infrastructure, particularly the local digital telephone network. Currently, Montenegro had the highest penetration rate of mobile telephone users in the region and among European Union members.

52. Montenegro's strategy for development of the information society consisted of two parts, one dealing with electronic communication, the other with broadband. A significant number of projects had been completed relating *inter alia* to development of ICT infrastructure and education of human resources. Special attention had been given to increasing ICT training in primary and secondary schools, inter alia by increasing the number of PCs available to students.

53. Montenegro remained committed to the development of a modern and democratic society and to using the opportunities of ICTs to that end.

54. **Mr. Ringborg** (Sweden) said that as the Internet continued to grow, the international community must find the right balance of governance structures that would take full account of all stakeholders around the world. Full multi-stakeholder participation in the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) must include the private sector and civil society. Sweden was pleased that the mandate of the IGF had been extended.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.